No. 80

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

Rage, disappointment and fierce jealousy dominated her. She turned the idea of murdering Marie over in her mind with the cold deliberation of a criminal.

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MRS. AMES changed the conversation, which which had been about Hazel Wynne, to discussing about the coming football game between Yale and Harvard. But while her lips were busy keeping the conversation in the channel she desired, she was thinking about the other matter concerning Robert and the girl he had mentioned.

"Alice and I are going with you, Robert," the mother declared. "You won't mind, will you?"

"Certainly not, mumsy, dear," Robert responded with much warmth. "But do you think you can stand being exposed to the cold for a few hours? You are not very strong, you know."

Mrs. Ames laughed a cheerful laugh.

"I feel much stronger since I was blessed with a companion like Miss Procter here," she said with a fond look at Alice. "I'll be quite well again if she keeps on taking such good care of me."

Alice blushed vividly at the compliment thus bestowed upon her. She presented a wonderful picture with those soft cheeks of hers flooded with color.

Arthur Vernon sat contemplating her in silent admiration. What a beautiful woman she was, he thought.

She took no part in the conversation, and she did not hear half that was said. Her mind was busy searching for some means of preventing Robert Ames from going back to Westchester and that Wynne girl.

There was not the least doubt that it could be managed with the help of the young man's father.

Charles Ames had now become her devoted slave. She had but to crook her finger to bring him to her. She had but to breathe a wish, and it was granted.

Yes, the power of this beautiful siren was great indeed. She dominated the entire household with her subtle suggestions.

She had weaned herself into Mrs. Ames' affection with devilish ingenuity. She had done things she never would have thought of doing before. The reward for her labors must not be allowed to slip away from her.

For Charles Ames had promised that his only son should marry her if she consented to become his mistress.

Chapter 264

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

MR. SHIELDS suddenly found himself in a perplexing situation when Philip Gordon called at his office entirely unexpected. No doubt he had called to discuss a few details in connection with the divorce proceedings. But it would never do for Phil to find Miss Desmond in his office.

Meeting her there must arouse his suspicion. The time when the barrier between these two was to be removed, had not yet come.

As Gordon entered the private sanctorum of the old lawyer, the latter was busy looking over some papers lying before him on the desk.

"Glad to see you, Phil," Mr. Shields greeted, pointing to a chair. "Have a seat."

Phil sat down, his face very grave.

"Well, what's on your mind?" the attorney inquired. "You look as though you were going to be hung."

"I—I came to talk about a rather delicate matter," the visitor announced haltingly. "It involves a woman who is very dear to me. Perhaps you can guess her name."

"No, I can't," the other grinned. "What is her name."

"Marie Desmond."

For a moment Mr. Shields remained silent.

"What about her?" he demanded.

"I would like to know if there is anything which might prevent me from marrying her," remarked Phil,

a wave of color surging into his cheeks. "I love her dearly, and——"

"Then you have definitely given up the search for your first wife, have you?" the old lawyer inquired, grinning again.

Gordon nodded, his lips pressed firmly together.

"Yes," he confessed reluctantly, "I have decided to give up the search. I am more than convinced that my first wife is no longer among the living. I can not conceive of a mother remaining away from her children for such a length of time. Marie must be dead."

"Are you sure you love this Miss Desmond?" asked Mr. Shields furtively.

"What a question," replied Gordon with an injured air. "I'll tell you, there isn't another woman like her on earth. But I am afraid she'll refuse me."

"Why should she refuse you, Phil?"

"Because — because of the rumor that my first wife is still alive," came back in a quivering tone. "And I can't blame her."

A lengthy space of silence ensued.

"I will render you an opinion after this affair which affects your second wife has been disposed of," the old lawyer remarked finally. "Now I want to talk to you about something else. Do you recall a man by the name of Perkins, Samuel Perkins?"

"Sam Perkins was in my employ for a while before we moved to Oak Manor," Gordon retorted. "I had to discharge him for drunkeness. What about him?"

"Well," the other drawled, "it seems that this same Perkins framed one of the charity nurses. I am speaking of a Miss Carrel. She was sent to his home to wait on his sick wife.

"He got fresh with her, and she wouldn't stand for it. Then Perkins put a bottle of moonshine into her

bag and allows her to carry it away with her.

"The young woman was intercepted on her way home by a prohibition officer who had been tipped off by Perkins. She was arrested and is being held for transporting liquor in violation of the eighteenth amendment. I have charge of the case, and I wondered if you would help me out."

"I'll be glad to," cried Phil readily. "But what can I do?"

"Appear in court when this Miss Carrel's case comes up for trial," rejoined Mr. Shields. "Sam Perkins was in your employ. You know what kind of a man he is. Your testimony might help to free the girl."

"You can count on me," Gordon exclaimed. "Sam Perkins was not only a confirmed drunkard, but also a thief and a liar."

Mr. Shields nodded his head with satisfaction.

"Your testimony will corroborate any statement Miss Carrel may make on the stand, Phil," he said. "And I think we'll be able to turn the tables on Sam Perkins. In addition I shall gather enough evidence to convict him of being a bootlegger."

The conversation did not drag on much longer. Gordon once more seemed anxious to find out what the old attorney thought of his marriage to Miss Desmond.

With a shrewd smile Mr. Shields waved the question aside.

"I'll give you my opinion after your affair with your second wife has been settled," he said with a flourish of his hand. "And perhaps I'll have a surprise for you."

Philip Gordon left the office with one word constantly ringing in his ears. That one word was "surprise."

What had Mr. Shields meant by saying that? Not

for a moment did it occur to him that this Marie Desmond and his beloved first wife might be one and the same person.

Mr. Shields did not liberate the two sisters from the adjoining room until he was quite sure that Gordon had gone.

Marie was breathing hard with subdued excitement, while Julia still wore a worried look. Neither of them had spoken a word during their confinement.

"I have some good news for you,, my dear," the lawyer said, addressing the charity nurse. "The man who is responsible for your present predicament was once in the employ of Gordon. When your trial comes up, Phil will appear and tell all he knows about this Sam Perkins."

Julia turned white.

"No—no!" she gasped. "He mustn't!"

"But why not?" Marie interposed. "If it will help your case——"

"There are a few things you do not know," the former actress broke in with considerable vehemence. "There is a reason why I can not face Philip Gordon in court nor anywhere else.

"He will not feel inclined to help me when he finds out that Miss Carrel is none other than Julia Carey, his sister-in-law."

"Why, I don't understand you," cried Marie in a hurt tone. "You were not responsible for anything that happened between Phil and myself."

Julia gazed at her sister for a long while without speaking. Finally she said:

"Have you forgotten the story I told you when I came to visit you for the first time at Oak Manor? I am sure you remember."

Marie nodded and her cheeks turned red.

"Yes, I do remember," she murmured.

"Do you think Phil would still care to help me, knowing what he does about me?" the former actress went on. "He is a very proud man, and not likely to go to the front for a woman who once walked the streets. I am afraid he——"

"Please do not speak about that again," Marie exclaimed.

Then followed another moment of the most depressing silence. It seemed that a barrier had suddenly been erected between the two sisters.

The one had always kept herself clean and unstained, while the other had been dragged through the gutter.

Julia was beginning to feel more and more apprehensive. She glanced furtively at Marie and saw the look of pain on the latter's face.

Presently Marie smiled, although it was a bitter smile.

"We must try to forget it, dear," she said. "So far as Phil is concerned, I don't think he would refuse to help you when he finds out how earnestly you have been trying to atone."

Julia's face brightened at this, still, she would not rid herself of the fear which clutched at her heart.

"This prohibition agent," she began with her face averted, "he—he knows too much about me. I met him one night on the street. What if he would tell about that in court and within Phil's hearing? Oh, I could never stand it."

"Neither could I," Marie cried. "That must be prevented by all means."

"But how can we prevent it?"

"God only knows. I don't."

The two sisters stared at one another helplessly.

Both knew that this prohibition agent would go to any extreme to get his revenge. No one could stop him if, as a part of his testimony, he mentioned a former meeting with Julia.

Suddenly the latter sprang up.

"Oh, there is only one thing left for me to do," she exclaimed, a desperate light in her eyes. "Rather than be branded as a fallen woman in open court, I'll end it all."

She made a dash for the door, but Marie caught up with her.

"Let me go!" Julia begged.

"No—no," answered Marie in tears. "I'll stand by you no matter what happens. Come let us sit down and reason this thing out together. There must be some way of preventing that prohibition agent from baring your past. I'll speak to Mr. Shields. I'll go to Phil. I'l do anything for you, Julia."

Chapter 265

THE ORPHAN

IT WAS indeed a tragedy which befell Hazel Wynne when her mother was found dead in bed one morning. It left her, a tender flower of scarcely seventeen utterly alone and friendless. Already her young soul had been overburdened with grief before this blow came. Robert Ames, the hero of her girlish dreams, had passed out of her life.

He had gone to attend the annual football game between Yale and Harvard, and he had failed to return as he had so faithfully promised to do.

When the remains of her mother were laid to rest, the miserable young girl seemed like one paralyzed. Her grief could not find an outlet in tears. Not a single word of sympathy ever reached her ears. And mighty few were spoken.

Since her close friendship with the handsome stranger from Philadelphia, her popularity had suddenly waned.

Mean things were said about her. Ugly things were thought about her. Those of her own sex were loudest in the condemnation of her.

There was but one consolation for poor Hazel. She found it by daily visiting her mother's grave. Here she knelt and wept and prayed alternately.

But it seemed her grief could not be assuaged. It increased day by day, until at last she was hardly able to stand it.

It was one bleak, cheerless September day. The blue firmament was hidden behind an endless blanket of

dark, ominous clouds.

A heavy gray mist had been hanging over the village and its little city of the dead since the early morning.

At last it came down in a fine drizzling rain.

The joyless caprices of the elements, as they wept out their grief, intensified the leaden weariness of spirit of the young girl who knelt again at the edge of a little hill which covered the beloved dead.

The last ray of sunshine which had been the only remaining source of her young life's happiness, had disappeared forever.

It lay beneath the cold sod.

It had been buried the day her mother was borne to he rlast resting place.

Unmindful of the steady downpour, she remained motionless, her bitter tears mingling with those of the heavens.

The poignant grief and terrible anguish in her soul had benumbed her senses, and she was beyond the feeling of any physical discomfort.

Poor Hazel Wynne had indeed been left alone to battle against the odds of an unsympathetic world. Her future was like the color of the sky, dark and ominous.

The gray mist was being driven headlong toward the South by a constantly rising wind, and when at last the sun peeped dolefully from behind the jagged edges of the clouds, its bright rays were like a benignant smile from heaven.

The unhappy young girl shuddered as a great sob burst from her pale lips.

Finaly she rose, with her dull eyes staring into space, then they wandered slowly in the direction of the restless ocean not far away.

Her heart sank as she thought of her future.

"Mother—mother!" she wailed pitifully. "Why could I not have died with you?"

But there was no answer to her tearful plea save the mournful moaning of the turbulent waves.

Hazel had not tried to pray. She never thought of that. She only knew how desolate and miserable she was.

She imagined vainly that to rest beneath those waves would end all despair and grief.

At last she dragged her weary feet toward the water's edge.

Here she could sit and pour out her nameless sorrow and grief, knowing that there was no human ear to listen.

For the moment she forgot that there was someone above who watched over her, as she sat there with a wild, desperate look in her eyes.

Hazel had taken the same seat she had so often occupied—the trunk of a fallen tree. But to-day she was alone.

Never again would she hear the anxious voice of her mother, chiding her for stealing away to her favorite nook.

Nor was she to feel the protecting arm of her young lover about her trembling shoulders again. He, too, had gone — never to return.

Ah, how she longed to hear him say again the words he had so often uttered in his young, boyish enthusiasm:

"Hazel, I love you. I shall always love you!"

He had returned to the great city beyond the hills to live among his own class, the rich aristocrats.

He had no doubt long forgotten his rustic sweetheart and his promise to her.

The sun was going down rapidly now, flooding the

waves with a beautiful mellow glow.

Hazel watched it descend with an expression of reverence and awe. She longed to go down, down with the fiery king of the firmament to the unknown deep.

As she sat there with the desperate resolve taking a firmer hold, no thought of the hereafter crossed her disordered mind.

She rose with a sudden impulse, then staggered slightly and sank back upon the seat with a low moan.

"Save me, oh God!" was the fervent prayer which came like a sob.

She quickly covered her white face with her hands, as if to shut out the horrible vision which had risen before her from the restless waves.

"Oh, I cannot—I cannot," she gasped. "If I only had the courage."

Abandoning herself to the wildest grief and despair, the tears came anew.

She failed to hear the footsteps which came from the direction of the little cemetery.

The figure of a man had suddenly disengaged itself from a clump of trees and came rapidly toward the weeping girl.

He was young and tall, with a fine intellectual face and handsome dark eyes.

He had reached her side unperceived and stood there in silence for some moments, regarding her with an expression of infinite pity and compassion.

"Hazel—Hazel," he said softly.

The girl started up at the sound of his voice and stared at the speaker as if she had seen a ghost.

"Robert!" she panted, "is it really you, or am I dreaming?"

She groped about wildly, then staggered forward and fell limply into his outstretched arms.

For a full minute he held her close and neither spoke a word.

"You poor, unhappy child," he murmured at length. "I heard of your mother's death and I came at once. They told me I would find you in the little cemetery yonder. I am very sorry for you."

"My heart is broken," she sobbed. "I am all alone now."

"You are not all alone, Hazel," he said with a note of gentle reproach in his voice. "Tell me, dearest, am I nothing to you?"

Her large luminous eyes sought his, they seemed to look into his very soul. He met her gaze unflinchingly —eagerly.

"Will you not trust me, Hazel?" he whispered.

"I have always trusted you, Robert," she breathed.

Then he drew her down to a seat. They listened silently to the gentle voice of the murmuring waves with his face close to hers.

Finally he spoke.

His words were only the repetition of the old, old story, as he told her of his great love.

"I love you more than my own life, sweetheart," he was saying. "I have loved you ever since the first day I saw you in the woods yonder."

"Ah, I cannot live without you. I want you to become my wife."

"Your wife?" she asked aghast.

"Yes, my own darling wife."

"But what will your wealthy relations say to our marriage, Robert?" she protested mildly. "You know I am very poor, while you are rich and powerful."

"I care not for the opinion of relatives nor for the whole world," the young lover cried. "I want you and I

want to be everything to you, since your dear mother has joined the ranks of the angels above. Tell me, dearest, will you marry me?"

She looked deeply into his eyes, while tears of unspeakable joy and happiness came into her own.

"Yes," she breathed at last. "I will be your wife. But are you sure you will never regret it?"

"Never, my own darling."

Then their lips met in a long passionate kiss, and thus their troth was plighted.

Alice Procter had not been successful in preventing Robert Ames from returning to Westchester after the annual football game. But she managed to whisper a word of warning to his father.

The latter instantly called the family spy and secretary, Arthur Vernon into a private conference.

"I am told that my boy fell for some pretty country maiden, Arthur," the multi-millionaire began. "Is that true?"

"Oh, it's nothing serious," Vernon laughed. "Only a momentary fancy."

"Well, I am glad to hear that," the master went on. "Robert insists upon going back to do some more duck shooting. I want you to go with him, and it is up to you to see to it that he does not get mixed up in any possible matrimonial alliance. The woman he is to marry has already been picked by me."

Arthur Vernon promised faithfully that he would keep Robert out of trouble.

And determined to keep this promise, he accompanied the young man back to Westchester.

But Robert Ames proved to be very elusive. As soon as he heard that old Mrs. Wynne had died during his absence, he went in search of Hazel.

The result of that search has been told. At the

grave of the young girl's mother he asked her to become his wife.

It had been customary at the Ames home to let the social secretary make all the necessary arrangements for any function. Perhaps it was the force of habit which prompted Robert to trust Arthur Vernon now.

Upon the latter fell the task of procuring the marriage license and a minister.

Vernon's heated objections were laughed at by the love-stricken young man. He meant to marry Hazel Wynne and that was all there was to it. Nothing else mattered now.

Vernon faced a perplexing problem. He could not afford to lose Robert's friendship and good will. Neither dared he go contrary to the elder Ames' wishes.

With a peculiar smile on his face he set out to do the only thing possible under the circumstances. He procured a blank marriage certificate which he filled out himself. Then he hired an old friend to play the part of a minister.

The mock marriage ceremony was performed in the cottage now fixed up to receive the lovely young bride at its mistress.

Two weeks of blissful honeymoon followed. Poor Hazel believed herself to be Mrs. Robert Ames, and she was happy indeed.

With the money which Robert Ames had furnished, Arthur Vernon was enjoying a trip to New York.

He had orders not to return unless he was sent for. This arrangement suited Vernon very well. So far as he could see there was nothing to worry about.

He had kept his promise to the elder Ames and to Robert as well. What the future held in store he gave no thought.

"No use crossing a bridge until you come to it."

was one of his stock phrases.

But Arthur Vernon had done a dastardly thing. With cold deliberation he had ruined two young lives, for the young couple loved one another devotedly.

After a three weeks stay in New York, Vernon returned to Westchester. He found Robert Ames and his sweet young bride supremely happy.

Then, like a bolt from a clear sky, came the news that the elder Ames had suddenly been taken seriously ill.

The telegram was received by Vernon, who showed it to Robert while Hazel had gone to do some shopping.

"What's to be done now?" he inquired doggedly.

"You go home and find out how bad dad is," Robert suggested. "If he is dangerously ill, let me know at once, and I'll come."

"How about — about your wife?" inquired the villain.

"She'll remain here for the present," came back with a sigh. "As soon as I have had a chat with dad and mother, I'll bring her to Philadelphia. I'll make all the necessary explanations."

Arthur Vernon grinned.

"Very well," he said.

An hour later he was on his way to Philadelphia.

Chapter 266

ALICE'S TRIUMPH

ARTHUR VERNON found the multi-millionaire banker near death. The latter seemed to realize that the end was near, and he constantly called for his only son. Before Vernon sent the telegram that was to bring Robert home, he made a few inquiries.

He was not a little amazed to learn that Charles Ames had uttered the desire that Robert should marry Alice Procen, his wife's companion. And so when he finally sent the wire to Westchester, he included this bit of information.

It was late in the evening when the telegram was sent. This meant that Robert could not reach home before the next morning.

Vernon appeared to be rather excited when he went down to meet the incoming train from Westchester.

He paced the floor of the waiting room in big, restless strides. Several times he consulted his watch, then walked out into the train shed.

"I hope that train is on time," he muttered to himself. "The old chap is done for. But he is holding on grimly until he has seen his boy. And what a surprise Robert will get."

In spite of the tragic situation, Vernon could summon a smile.

Presently the heavy rumbling announced the arrival of the train. As soon as it came to a stop, Robert Ames alighted from the last coach.

His handsome face was unusually pale. He looked searchingly about, and his eyes lit up momentarily as they spied Vernon.

"I am glad you have come," exclaimed the latter, shaking the young man's hand.

"Is dad really in danger?" Robert asked with a catch in his voice.

"The doctors hold out no hope for him," the social secretary answered. "They say it is only a question of a few more hours now. I think we better hurry."

There was no more conversation until they were seated in the family limousine.

"What about this idea you mentioned in your telegram, Arthur," the young man was first to speak. "Are you trying to kid me at a time like this? Who told you that dad expected me to marry Miss Procter? Where did you get such crazy ideas?"

"From several sources," Vernon retorted. "Even your mother admitted it when I made an inquiry."

"My mother?"

"Yes, your mother, Robert. And she seemed quite pleased about it. She thinks that her lovely companion is the finest young woman that ever drew breath. But I believe it was your father who first broached the idea of you marrying Miss Procter. In fact, he is absolutely determined about the match."

Robert Ames could not find adequate words to express himself. He had always felt rather antagonistic toward Alice Procter lately.

He was aware of the fact that she made an attempt to prevent him from returning to Westchester after the football game.

And he had more than an inkling that she loved him. However, the idea of him making her his wife was preposterous.

"You know how utterly impossible it is for me to marry Miss Procter, Arthur," he said, laying a hand on Vernon's arm. "I already have a wife. I have not the least desire to commit bigamy. And besides, I love Hazel dearly."

The grin which overspread Vernon's features was far from pleasant."

"I take it for granted that you love Hazel," he declared. "But I doubt very much that in the eyes of the law she is really your wife."

"What?" Young Ames leaned forward. "Do you mean——"

"Please don't excite yourself unnecessarily, my boy," the other interrupted. "Now let us discuss a few details in connection with your marriage to that Wynne girl.

"She is pretty, I admit, but she is not suited to play the role as the wife of a man of your wealth and position must play. She is uneducated and awkward. You must admit that, Robert, if you want to be frank and honest about the matter.

"If you ever brought her to this city and introduced her as your wife among your high-brow friends, they'd laugh at you. But aside from all that, Robert, are you aware of the fact that Hazel Wynne was scarcely seventeen years of age when you went through that marriage ceremony with her?

"She was under age, and that being the case, could not marry legally without a guardian's sanction. And I——"

"But I left everything to you, Arthur," young Ames broke in tremblingly. "I took it for granted that you would see to it that everything was right and legal. Why didn't you do it?"

"I did, so far as possible," Vernon returned. "The

girl's guardian is an old uncle, a retired farmer, who had gone on an extended visit to Florida with the intention of making his future home there.

"You were in such a hurry to have the marriage take place, that I did not have the heart to delay and cause you disappointment. That is the way the matter stands now. Legally Hazel is not your wife. Neither are you her husband."

Robert Ames bowed his head and a groan burst from his lips.

"There is but one thing to do," he remarked, stifling another groan. "We have wronged Hazel frightfully. It must be righted. As soon as I have seen dad, and I can get away, I'll go to Florida and look up her uncle.

"There is not the least doubt in my mind that I can get his consent. Another marriage ceremony then will make Hazel my legal wife. Yes, I'll make her my wife no matter what the consequences may be."

Arthur Vernon shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course, that is up to you, my boy," he said "But I suggest that you refrain from making any plans until you have seen your father."

Just then the automobile dashed around the corner of Broad Street and came to a stop in front of one of the many palatial residences.

Robert Ames alighted first and dashed up the broad stone terrace.

In the reception hall his sweet-faced mother sat with outstretched arms to welcome her only boy back home.

Wih a glad cry she threw herself into his arms.

"Thank God that you have come, my boy," she cried, while the tears rolled down her cheeks. "I was afraid that you would not arrive in time. Your father

is constantly calling for you."

Robert Ames felt strangely uncomfortable when his mother looked long and searchingly into his face.

"Robert," she whispered, "for heaven's sake and for mine, by all the manhood and chivalry there is in you, be patient with your father when he speaks to you, and do not oppose his wishes."

"I'll try not to, mother dear," he wavered.

Robert Ames wondered what the request of his father might be.

He would willingly grant anything in his power, except one thing, and that was to consent to his marriage with Alice Procter.

He had scarcely thought of her when she emerged from the drawing room and ran forward eagerly to greet him.

"Welcome home, Robert," she said in her well modulated voice.

She stood before him, a tall supple figure, gracefulness depicted in every curve of her lithe body. A small, shapely head sat upon well rounded shoulders, crowned with masses of dark hair.

A marvelous pair of jet black eyes looked boldly upon the world, and two sets of perfect white teeth showed from between the half parted scarlet and quivering lips.

"Have you no pleasant word of greeting for me, Robert?" she pleaded.

"None, except to thank you for your kindness toward my dear parents," he replied icily.

She apparently did not expect this from him. Her face flushed hotly, and before she could frame a reply, Robert's mother reappeared.

"Father is waiting, Robert," she said in a pleading tone.

"All right, mother. I'll come with you at once."

With a curt nod to Alice he folowed his mother to the sick-room.

Alice remained standing there for some moments like a lovely statue, then with a toss of her pretty head she ran out of the room.

Charles Ames, the man of millions, half sat up in bed supported by pillows.

It became evident with the first glance at the face of the great financier, that he grim reaper was slowly dragging him toward a dark and yawning chasm — the grave.

When his son entered a smile crossed his fine and handsome face.

"I am glad that you have come, Robert," he said in a feeble voice.

Robert Ames walked quickly to the side of his father and took the outstretched hand in his. It was cold and lifeless.

"How are you, dad?" the young man answered softly.

"Remember, my boy. One word of opposition from your lips might kill him instantly," his mother whispered to him.

The pale, worn face of the dying man, the soft shadows and the faint light, his mother's pathetic face —this scene was one never to be forgotten.

Rober was overawed, he was ready to listen to the dying request of his father.

"I am glad that you and Alice understand each

other, Robert," the old man began.

"Alice and I——?" the young man faltered.

"Yes, is it not true? I have heard so from her own lips."

Robert Ames was silent, he felt the burning glance of his mother upon him.

"It has become the dream of my life to see you and Alice as man and wife," continued Charles Ames. "It will mean much to you, more than you will ever know. Alice loves you, my boy, and I want you to promise me before I die that you will make her your wife."

Young Robert Ames trembled from head to foot. What he feared and dreaded had come. His handsome face grew white with emotion.

For a moment he was not able to utter a word.

When he was about to make a clean breast of it all to his father, he felt the pressure of his mother's hand upon his arm.

"Don't kill him by refusing," she whispered.

A sudden wave of affection and gratitude overcame the young man.

There, before him lay the dearest and most indulgent father in all the world. He asked but one thing—and this he could not grant.

Then a thought occurred to him. He would temporize.

There was no need of killing his father with the truth, and he need not stain his own lips with a lie.

"My dearest father," he said caressingly, "you know that I would do anything on earth for you. Have you not done everthing for me?"

"Heaven bless you, my boy. I knew that I could rely on you. My heart is set on this marriage between Alice and you; besides, it is imperative that it take place at once."

"But why in such a hurry, father?" Robert asked.

"Bend your head closer my boy."

Robert did as requested. He listened to the whispered words of his dying father, while his face turned strangely white. Then suddenly he straightened up, and a loud groan escaped his lips.

"Oh God! Tell me it is not true, father," he cried desperately. "Is there no other way out of this?"

"None, Robert—none. Tell me, you—you don't mean to refuse — me — this," Charles Ames faltered. There were tears in his eyes.

Never was a man so fearfuly tried than Robert Ames was this moment.

Hazel's face was before him with her pansy eyes and scarlet mouth. He could hear her sweet voice saying again these words:

"Are you sure that you will never regret it, dear Robert?"

His brain whirled and his thoughts grew misty and confused.

God—he wanted to do what was right and yet he could not bring himself to murder his father by telling him of his worst folly.

"Very well, father. It shall be as you wish, I will marry Alice Procter."

The words escaped his lips all to quick, yes, half against his will.

"A promise or a betrothal is not a marriage," he argued with himself. He was willing to do most anything to insure his father a peaceful death. After that he could adjust matters in the best and proper way.

When Charles Ames heard his boy voice his willingness to grant his last wish, he breathed a sigh of intense relief.

"God bless you, my boy," the old man whispered.

"Now I can die in peace, yes, I shall die happy." His voice was growing perceptibly weaker.

The dim tired eyes drooped heavily and a look of repose came over his palid face. He rallied a moment later and motioned to his wife to come nearer.

"Bring Alice and the minister, mother," he said feebly, "I shall not rest content until the ceremony has been performed."

Robert Ames started up as if stung by an adder. He had not looked for this. He found himself in a frightful dilemma. There was no retracing — no escape for him now.

The door opened and his mother returned, followed by Alice, Arthur Vernon and a minister.

Robert was stunned. The ceremony was brief. The words of the minister sounded far away.

When it was all over he stood there like a statue of marble

He did not see the red lips of the beautiful woman before him, waiting to be kissed. Niether saw he the mocking smile of triumph on the face of Arthur Vernon, his confidential friend.

Chapter 267

THE TRIAL

THE DAY when Julia Carey, or Olive Carrel, as she chose to call herself now, was to be tried, had come at last. Dressed in the garb of a charity nurse, she entered the court room accompanied by Mr. Shields. The latter glanced about occasionally after they were seated.

There was a slight frown of impatience on his wrinkled face, which quicky disappeared when Philip Gordon entered.

Julia blushed vividly at sight of the owner of Oak Manor. They had not met again since that eventful night when she accosted him in the front of his club.

Gordon, not knowing that the charity nurse to be tried for transporting liquor, was Julia Carey, his sister-in-law, gasped with astonishment when he saw her.

"Why, Julia," he exclaimed, taking his hand eagerly in hers. "What a pleasure." He winked at Mr. Shields, then added: "So you are the wonderful Miss Carrel I have been hearing so much about."

"Who spoke to you about me?" she queried, a humorous twist about her lips.

"Victor Talbot for one," Phil replied. "And his wife Lillian. They tell me you worked wonders with that Knight case. And there is Dr. Van Buren. Oh, by the way, did you know that Dr. Van Buren married Mrs. Knight?"

Julia nodded with a smile.

"Yes, Phil. And they are very happy together."

As Gordon was about to speak again a name was

called by one of the court officers, and an old woman tottered up to the bar.

Two small children clung to her torn skirts.

"Mrs. Wagner," began the prosecuting attorney, "you are charged with making and selling homebrew. Are you guilty or not?"

The woman wiped her mouth with her sleeve.

"I guess I am guilty," she answered in a low quivering tone. "I made quite a lot of homebrew and I sold some of it to neighbors."

"Do you know that you broke the law when you did that?" the prosecutor inquired.

"No, I did not, sir," she replied.

At this juncture, the judge took a hand in the proceedings.

He had been watching the old woman from the moment she approached the bar. His kindly eyes rested sympathetically on the two children with her.

"Mrs. Wagner," he began, "just tell me why you sold some of that homebrew."

With tears streaming down her face, the old woman unfolded a most pitiful tale.

The two children with her were her grandchildren left to her at the death of their mother, her daughter, whose husband was doing a term in the States prison for bootlegging.

Being too old and feeble to do heavy work, she had hit upon the idea of making and selling homebrew in order to keep the wolf from the door.

"And then there were these two children," she continued sobbingly. "They are all I have in the world. I could not see them starve, Your Honor. What I did, I did more for them than myself, for I love them so."

It was very evident that the two children loved their grandmother. When they saw her weep, they too,

broke into tears.

The arresting officer was called.

His testimony seemed all in favor of the woman. Then the judge looked sternly at the prohibition agent who was present as the chief prosecuting witness.

"You did a brave thing in causing this poor woman's arrest," he said sarcastically to the latter. "While I have no desire to condone her offense, I feel constrained to criticize you. Chicago right now is a hot-bed of vice.

"Known bootleggers do a tremendous volume of business. Why don't you go after some of them? Why pick on a poor woman who is driven by necessity to break the prohibition law in a mild way?"

Not a word came from the prohibition agent.

He was obviously a man of low type. His apologetic grin revealed two rows of partly broken and yellow teeth.

"I am going to dismiss the case," the judge spoke again. "I shall dismiss all similar cases."

That ended it. But Julia's eyes rested with horror on the face of the prohibition agent. He was the same man who had arrested her.

And he was also one of the night prowlers whom she had accosted when still walking the city streets.

"Call the next case," ordered the judge.

"Olive Carrel!" the court officer cried. "Olive Carrel!"

She moved forward with every limb trembling.

But Philip Gordon moved with her. He had noticed the look of horror which Julia gave the prohibition officer and he shrewdly drew his own conclusion.

He held a whispered conversation with Mr. Shields, he nodded.

Julia presented a very pretty picture as she stood

before the bar. No woman ever looked more like a suffering, penitent Magdalene than she did this moment. Without raising her eyes she waited.

"You are charged with transporting liquor, Miss Carrel," the prosecuting attorney addressed her. "Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," she answered in a breath.

"Hold up your hand and be sworn."

The usual oath was administered, after which Julia was asked to tell her story. It appeared that she was no longer afraid as she suddenly found her voice.

On her one side stood Philip Gordon, and on the other, Mr. Shields, her defending attorney. Several officials from the associated charities were also present to testify to her good character.

She told how she had been taking care of Mrs. Sam Perkins, and how Perkins made improper advances toward her.

She then related that the man had threatened "to take her down a notch".

"I did not know that the whiskey had been placed in my bag," she ended. "I was amazed when the prohibition officer accosted me on the street, opened my bag, and then arrested me. While I have no positive proof, I feel sure that Perkins framed me."

Sam Perkins stood a few feet away with an ugly leer on his face.

"Your Honor," Mr. Shields spoke up, "I ask permission to ask Sam Perkins a few questions."

"You have the permission," smiled the judge.

Perkins was asked o take he stand. The oath was administered, after which Mr. Shields pointed his finger at him and began:

"Were you ever arrested, Sam Perkins?"

The question seemed to startle the man. He hesi-

tated a moment, then said in a distinct voice:

"No, sir."

Mr. Shields grinned.

"Did you ever work for this gentleman here?" indicating Philip Gordon.

"I did," was the surly retort.

"Did you ever steal anything from Mr. Gordon?"

"Never," came back vehemently.

"Are you quite sure about that?"

"Yes."

"Did Mr. Gordon ever accuse you of crooked work while you were in his employ."

This question Perkins answered in the negative. That was another mistake. He had been arrested twice, and Phil Gordon had accused him in the presence of others of being a thief.

"Do you realize that you are under oath to tell the truth?" was Mr. Shields' next question.

"What you are talking about has nothing to do with this case," Perkins shot back angrily. "That woman there stole several bottles of moon from my house and sold them."

A general laugh followed this statement.

Again Mr. Shields plied him with questions. Some of them he answered in a surly manner, others not at all.

But it became very plain that the man was convicting himself. By the time he was excused, the perspiration trickled down his bloated face.

Now Philip Gordon volunteered to testify. In fact he insisted upon it against the advise of Mr. Shields.

"Your Honor," he said, bowing to the judge, "I have the pleasure of knowing Miss Carrel personally and wish to state that the lady is a relative of mine."

Continued in next number

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